

Remarks

Further and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

Thus, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 4, and claim 2 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 14 (claims 4 and 14 are identical to each other except for their dependency), as a result of which claims 4 and 14 have been cancelled.

Amended claims 1 and 2 use the term "immobilizing" instead of "inclusively fixing" in line 2 of each claim. The term "immobilizing" is disclosed at page 2, lines 10 and 16 of the specification.

The other changes which have been made in amending claims 1 and 2 are editorial in nature.

Since claims 4 and 14 have been cancelled, claims 5 and 15 have been amended to depend from claims 1 and 2, respectively.

The patentability of the present invention over the disclosures of the references relied upon by the Examiner in rejecting the claims will be apparent upon consideration of the following remarks.

The rejection of claims 1-3, 10, 13 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Maeda, as well as the rejection of claims 8, 9 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda further in view of Stoev et al., have been rendered moot in view of the amendments to the claims. Neither of these rejections includes claim 4 or claim 14, which as indicated above, have been respectively incorporated into amended claims 1 and 2.

The rejection of claims 4 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda further in view of JP 11-216479, as well as the rejection of claims 5-7 and 15-17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over this same combination of references further in view of Tanaka et al., are respectfully traversed.

The JP '479 reference is cited in the International Search Report, and in Applicants' IDS of August 17, 2001, which is based on the International Search Report. A copy of this reference together with an English abstract thereof are enclosed herewith.

Applicants take the position that the JP '479 reference is not available as prior art against the present invention, because its publication date of August 10, 1999 is subsequent to Applicants' Japanese priority date of February 19, 1999. The Examiner has acknowledged receipt of a copy of

the certified copy of the priority document (Office Action Summary page of April 1, 2003). A verified English translation of the Japanese priority application is submitted herewith. In view of this translation, Applicants take the position that JP '479 is not available as prior art against the present invention. For this reason alone, both of the rejections under discussion have been overcome.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the grounds of rejection set forth by the Examiner has been overcome, and that the application is in condition for allowance. Such allowance is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Takaaki MAEKAWA et al.

By:



Michael R. Davis

Registration No. 25,134

Attorney for Applicants

MRD/pth
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
September 15, 2003